

Environmental Education Commission

Meeting Minutes

February 21, 2014

Shreveport Convention Center, Room 206

4 PM

I. Call to order

Brenda Nixon called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

There were not enough members present for a quorum at the start of the meeting.

II. Roll Call/Sign-in

Members present: Ann Wilson, Linda Hardy for Alex Appeaning, Gary Balsamo, Angela Capello, Brenda Walkenhorst, Deepak Bhatnagar, Dean Blackett, Dinah Maygarden, Cole Ruckstuhl, Connie Connor, Melanie Dupre, Dianne Lindstedt, Brenda Nixon, Mindy Brooks (15 members)

Also in attendance: Thomas Gresham & Venise Ortego

Guest: Angelique Fogleman, Acadiana RC&D

III. Minutes from last meeting

Angela Capello made a motion for the reading of the minutes to be deferred due to lack of quorum. Connie Connor seconded. This was tabled until the end of the meeting. Minutes were reconsidered once a quorum was reached, which was after the Grants Program report.

IV. Financial Report

Venise Ortego gave the Financial Report; financial statement was included in the packets. Sustainability initiative grants have been paid.

V. Coordinator's Report

Venise reported that she has submitted a grant proposal to EPA for \$200,000, which will include:

- Marine Debris/ Watersheds Workshop series that defines watersheds in Region 6
- Two workshops for educators on the coast (LA and TX). Workshop participants encouraged to host field workshops for students within own watershed.
- Sub-grants – RFP limited to \$50,000
- Development of “Water Web” Website to map projects in relation to their watershed

VI. Old Business

A. Symposium Committee Reports/Needs

1. **Door Prize/Hospitality**, Connie reported that there are 36 door prizes and are set up. Many companies must get prior approval for donation of door prizes.
2. **Evaluation**, Cole reported that evaluations are ready to go.
3. **Exhibitors**: Angela reported that there are 23 exhibitors this year.
4. **Finance**: Gary commended LEEC for keeping finances in check – Shell is providing funding for symposium and registrations also provide further funds.
5. **Keynote**: Dean reported that the keynote is Dr. Kevin Baer from ULM (Watershed topic).
6. **Programs**, Brenda commented that there is a broad array of topics and that General Honoré will be speaking and exhibitors will be able to close exhibits so that they can attend.

7. **Public Relations:** Venise and Dean reported that Thomas worked hard to get the word out to school districts – mailings to supervisors (300 packets sent to Shreveport; focus on local area), etc., but due to layoffs at schools etc., it has been hard to get teachers to the symposium. The assistance with accommodation and substitutes did not work to bring enough people in. Brenda Nixon has found the same problems.
8. **Registration:** Brenda Walkenhorst reported that she is ready but may need some help with exhibitor registration. There are 76 preregistered and a total of 150 including the presenters, exhibitors, and commission members.
9. **Short Course:** Dinah and Thomas reported that the two short courses they attended went well. Short courses were generally well attended.

B. Symposium Volunteer Assignments

Venise reported that the assignments are covered and encouraged everyone to attend sessions and make notes on what should be included next year. She commented that on-site registration may be negligible.

C. Environmental Literacy Plan Status

The plan is with the Governor and awaits his signature. During the legislative session (begins March 10), it will be introduced in order of priority and may be considered low priority. If it is adopted by the Legislature, it will be the official ELP for the state.

D. Playmakers Status

The Playmakers gave LEEC a draft script and edits were made (will perform at symposium). Schools are being selected, with high priority given to schools with high numbers of free/reduced lunch students. There will be an effort to ensure that performances cover all four quadrants of the state (5 per quadrant).

Thomas has added an online application to the website www.ldwf.gov/playmakers.

Will direct schools to the application. Testing may interfere so members need to be pro-active in their areas. A notice will be sent in LEEC e-News. Playmakers will also be soliciting schools for participation. The grant will pay for up to 20 performances by the end of the fiscal year.

VII. New Business

A. Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) presentation

Regan Conner gave a presentation about this one-of-a-kind student led organization. It changed its name from Future Homemakers of America. Its goal is to help young men and women to become effective leaders by stressing life skills. The environment is a topic included. There is currently an Environmental Ambassadors Competition being launched and the organization is looking for help with judging, mentoring, etc. They would like to increase the environmental focus. There is a state event to be held in Baton Rouge on April 1 – at the Crown Plaza.

The web site is www.FCCLAinc.org (National); www.lafccclainc.org (Louisiana).

There are contact emails on the web site. Interested parties should contact the advisor. Dianne suggested sending info to Venise to email out with details.

B. Discuss 2015 Symposium

Brenda Nixon led a discussion about how to rethink the symposium in order to increase attendance. Several suggestions were discussed:

- Outdoor educator – like Outdoor Woman
- Ways to serve whole state – (Lake Charles needs coverage)
- One of the problems is that science is not a curriculum priority (math organizations do not have attendance issues). Some districts will not reimburse travel for science PD.
- There is good demand for workshops such as black bear and whooping crane.
- Incentives – already give CLUs. Districts allow 2 days/year for PD. Travel time to symposium means it would use both days.
- Environmental Ed Certifications – some states have this
- Discussion about designing a 1-day symposium; including short courses on Saturday.
- Two drive-in symposia around state to increase coverage – low budget – box lunches.

- Historically the attendance was around 200. Currently 75 (although this was small, it was still worthwhile)
- Venise will send out emails to continue the discussion so decisions can be made before next LEEC meeting.

C. 2014 Grants Program

Venise reported that RFPs are out and the closing date is March 17. Submission is online.

Educator grants: \$1000

Educator team grants: \$2000

Professional Development grants: \$2500

University grants: \$1200 – extra \$200 to provide poster at LEEC

Selections will be made in April.

EPA Sub-grant teachers will be presenting their work during the symposium.

Minutes from last meeting: There are now enough members present for a quorum so Deepak made a motion to accept the minutes. Gary seconded and a vote passed to accept the minutes from last meeting.

D. Art & Language Arts Contest date and judges

Thomas reported that the calendar has been distributed and the ads run. Billboards are being made (check accuracy of this)

April 25 is the next deadline. Entries are starting to come in. Need to encourage participation by spreading the word.

VII. Announcements

VIII. Next Meeting Dates: May 13, 2013, August 12, 2014, November 12, 2014

IX. Adjournment

Cole made motion to adjourn. Angela seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 5:05 p.m.